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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2008

In Today's Papers

Turkish Leaders on Court Decision on AKP

All news outlets continue giving extensive coverage to the consequences of the Constitutional Court ruling in the AKP closure case announced Wednesday. In his monthly address to the nation, Prime Minister Erdogan called for "unity." "The AKP has never been a focal point of anti-secular activities, and will continue to protect the values of our republic," said Erdogan. President Abdullah Gul said in a written statement released yesterday that in the coming period everyone must focus on the priority issues of the country such as the fight against terrorism and EU membership. Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan called on politicians to "assess well the reason for the decision, and take lessons." Opposition CHP lawmaker Onur Oymen told Italy's La Repubblica the Constitutional Court ruling was a "victory of the secularists." "This is a judicial decision and everybody should respect it," said far right MHP acting group chairman Oktay Vural.

Several papers report following the announcement of the Constitutional Court decision, PM Erdogan told high-level party and Cabinet officials that he cannot accept the claim that AKP has become a center for anti-secular activities. AKP Vice Chairman Dengir Firat said his party has always defended the basic principles of the Republic, and would continue doing so.

Mainstream Hurriyet comments that the Court's decision has put in place "red lines" for the ruling party. If the AKP attempts new moves on controversial issues such as the headscarf or Islamic theology high schools (Imam-Hatip,) the prosecutor could ask for the closure of the party again. Mainstreams Sabah, Hurriyet and Aksam say the PM might consider a cabinet reshuffle in September. Mainstream Milliyet says Erdogan discussed with President Abdullah Gul on Sunday the possibility of changing five or six ministers in the cabinet. Hurriyet expects Education Minister Huseyin Celik to be moved to the party board, and Energy Minister Hilmi Guler, Health Minister Recep Akdag, and party deputy chairman Dengir Mir Mehmet to be replaced. Papers also speculate the AKP might seek a compromise with the opposition on possible constitutional changes once things settle down in October.

#### International Reaction to Court Decision on AKP

Papers report Iraqi President Jalal Talabani phoned PM Erdogan to congratulate him over the favorable outcome. German Chancellor Merkel, Georgian President Shaakashvili, Italian PM Berlusconi and Iraqi PM Maliki called Erdogan and expressed their pleasure. Joost Lagendijk, the co-chairman of Turkey-EU Joint Parliament Committee, said in a statement that a court decision to close the AKP would have been anti-democratic and incompatible with European values. Lagendijk also asked the AKP to take the right lessons from the court verdict, and to continue reforms that would lead towards the EU. British Foreign Secretary David Miliband said, "The fact that the court chose not to close the party means Turkey can follow a more democratic and European path," and added Turkey's priority now should be reforms. The EU term president France said the EU "took note of the Constitutional Court decision," and that it would continue to watch Turkey, particularly its democratic institutions. Mainstream Milliyet reports EU ambassadors in Ankara see the Constitutional Court ruling as a "yellow card" for the AKP.

#### Editorial Commentary on Court Decision on AKP

Okay Gonensin wrote in mainstream Vatan (8/1): "The Prime Minister spent an entire year creating suspicion and making statements that fed worry. Therefore, it should now be his priority to eliminate those fears and worries in society. He has every resource he needs to do that: a parliament majority, popular support and a weak opposition. The European Union project is the most effective resource. It's been nice to hear government figures speaking about

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a 'new style' in the aftermath of the court decision. Let's hope these figures move beyond lip service to a new style to actual deeds that put it into effect."

Yasemin Congar wrote in leftist Taraf (8/1): "Let's hope that the AKP uses the Court decision as a chance for rebirth by moving forward with reforms and taking strong steps on difficult foreign issues. There is also a chance for AKP to fight with a strengthened political will against Ergenekon to its bitter end. The ruling party can be more reformist, pro-EU integration and decisive in foreign policy issues such as Armenia, northern Iraq and Cyprus. It can take the initiative towards a civilian constitution and form social consensus with a more democratic approach. If and when AKP chooses this path for the future, we can all take a deep breath of relief in the name of democracy."

Mainstream Milliyet carried this op-ed (8/1): "The Court decision represented a sensitive balance between democratic stability and the protection of secular values. The decision is like a guide to all sides of the dispute as well as to the public about the boundaries of this sensitive balance. The decision is a chance to decrease polarization within society and to establish a strong base for reconciliation. The current crisis is a result of the AKP's loss of aspiration for EU integration. Being inspired by the EU project is important for opening a new horizon for Turkey. The European Union also must show an effort to regain the hearths and minds in Turkey."

Ihsan Dagı wrote in Islamist-leaning Zaman (8/1): "The Court decision aims to create a hold over the AKP. The Court's message to the ruling party is 'You are guilty, but pardoned.' The AKP must either live with this restraint or reform the political structure. The future of AKP is through full democracy which calls for freedom, supremacy of law for everybody and equality. But this is not in reconciliation with the current system which is based on supremacy of the appointed ones over the elected ones. If AKP compromises with this bureaucratic ruling, it will lose its power."

The Supreme Military Council (YAS) Convenes  
Hurriyet, Sabah, Milliyet, Posta, Bugun, Vatan, Cumhuriyet, and others: Papers report that the Supreme Military Council (YAS) will convene under PM Erdogan today. 111 colonels and generals' retirement and promotion will be determined at the YAS and decisions will be announced to the public following President Gul's approval on Monday August 4. Mainstream Sabah says Land Forces

Commander General Basbug is expected to be assigned as the Chief of General Staff, Gendarmerie commander General Isik Kosaner will be the Land Forces Commander and deputy Chief of TGS General Saygun will be the 1st Army Commander. Air Force Commander General Aydoğan Babaoglu and Navy Commander Admiral Metin Atac will remain at their posts for one more year.

#### Tensions High in Kirkuk

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report on rising tensions surrounding the Kirkuk Provincial Council's decision to join the Kurdish Regional Administration. Liberal Radikal writes "Kirkuk Annexed to Kurdish Region," saying "while Kurds are protesting the provincial elections law which provides equal rights to Turkmens and Arabs, the Provincial Council decided yesterday the city should be annexed to the Kurdish region."

In "Tensions at the Top in Kirkuk," mainstream Milliyet writes "while tensions rise with the attacks targeting Turkmens in Kirkuk, the Provincial Council has decided in a special meeting to join the Kurdish Administration." The paper carries the Turkish Foreign Ministry's statement on the issue which expresses its concern about the rising tensions in Kirkuk. The statement notes "there's no change in Turkey's Kirkuk policy and Turkey invites all parties in Kirkuk and Iraq to compromise and pursue dialogue." Mainstream Hurriyet reports in "Turkmen's Cry for Help," that "Turkmen's are worried about the rising pressure of Kurds."

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#### Karadzic Appears at War Crimes Court

All papers report the former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic appeared before the UN war crimes tribunal at The Hague yesterday to face genocide charges. Mainstream Milliyet writes "Time to Pay the Bill," noting "Karadzic's bushy beard and the guru-like hair that helped him stay hidden nearly 13 years on the run, was gone." Mainstream Sabah writes in "Serbian Butcher Claims the U.S. Sold Him" that "Karadzic shockingly claimed that former Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke attempted to arrange for the indictment to be withdrawn in exchange for a deal with Karadzic that he disappear from public life." Liberal Radikal writes "Karadzic: U.S. Guaranteed," and reports "Ambassador Holbrooke denied all of Karadzic's claims, however, adds that Holbrooke further explained that Karadzic had to quit politics, and he did that." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet carries the headline, "I Have Holbrooke's Word," saying "Karadzic made his shocking appearance on the very first day."

#### One Sergeant Martyred at PKK Attack in Sivas

Sabah, Milliyet, Hurriyet, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Radikal and others: Today's papers report that PKK terrorists opened fire on a military vehicle near Cukuroba village in Sivas. One sergeant was killed and two soldiers and a technician were injured during the attack.

Meanwhile, Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that big personnel losses by the PKK in recent military operations, the terrorist group is exerting efforts to recruit new members. With little recruitment success in Turkey, the PKK is training Iranian youth at Kandil. Zaman also carries a PKK corruption story in which two administrators of a German PKK-affiliated association ran away with 500.000 Euro. Reportedly, the PKK gave the execution orders for these two fugitives.

#### TV Highlights

NTV

#### Domestic News

- Breaking News: On Friday, a three story girls dormitory collapsed in the central Anatolian city of Konya, killing more than 10 students. Many children are still buried in the rubble. The dormitory was reportedly used for religious education for girls.

- Merrill Lynch sees Turkish markets as "stable" following the Constitutional Court ruling in the AKP closure case.

- The Turkish Parliament's honorary award for 2008 goes to world famous Turkish historian, Professor Halil Inalcik.

## International News

- The Italian Parliament ratified the Lisbon Treaty one week after the Senate and lower house approved the accord.
  - President Bush declares progress in the Iraq war, saying terrorists "are on the run" and that further troop reductions should be coming.
  - Seventy-one terror attacks were reported in Turkey in the second quarter of 2008.
- WILSON